(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Central Government to solve the problems being faced by the farmers in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Pursuant to the memorandum received from Waynad Karshaka Samara Samiti, Waynad, Kerala, the Prime Minister's Office had requested Planning Commission to depute a team to visit Waynad district. Accordingly, a Planning Commission team accompanied by the State Government officials of Kerala visited Waynad district from 7th to 11th June, 2006 to study the agrarian crisis as mentioned in the memorandum. The team has submitted its report to the Planning Commission and the same is being examined.

Crisis in agriculture

408.SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Hon'ble Prime Minister's visit to Vidarbha explores farmers suicides as a result of agrarian crisis;

(b) if so, the safeguards that the Ministry proposes to implement; and

(c) whether the WTO conditionalities may be reviewed in the interest of the farmers to resolve the crisis in the agriculture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) The Hon'ble Prime Minister visited the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra on 30th June and 1st July, 2006 to see at first hand the distress of farmers in the region. A special package for mitigating the stress of farmers for the six districts of Vidarbha region, namely, Wardha, Yevatmal, Amravati, Akola, Buldana, and Washim, was announced by the Prime Minister during the visit. The package aims at establishing a sustainable and viable farming and livelihood support system through debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, crop centric approach to agriculture, assured irrigation facilities, watershed management, better extension and farming support services, improved marketing facilities and subsidiary income opportunities through horticulture, livestock, dairying, fisheries, etc.

Agricultural imports as a percentage of GDP from agriculture in India is less than 4%. India also has a surplus of exports over imports in agriculture trade. Under the existing WTO rules, India can, *inter alia,* protect its farmers by raising the applied levels of customs duties within our WTO bindings. This option has been exercised by the country, in recent past, on a number of products. The. WTO rules also permit imposition of safeguard duties, over and above, the bound level of duties, in cases import surges causing serious injury to domestic producers.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture is, at present, being re-negotiated. In the ongoing negotiations, the Indian proposals are aimed at providing necessary protection to domestic farmers against imports, retaining the flexibility for providing appropriate level of support to farmers in the country and opening up of markets for agricultural products in developed countries.

Special package for States

409.MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Centre has announced a special package for the farmers of certain States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Orissa is also one of the beneficiaries; and

(d) if so, the details of the financial and other support that is proposed to be rendered to the farmers of this poor and backward State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The Government has decided to launch a special rehabilitation package to mitigate the distress of farmers in 31 Districts in the States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradsh, Karnataka, and Kerala.

The package includes both immediate and medium term measures. It aims at establishing a sustainable and viable farming and livelihood support system through debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, crop centric approach to agriculture, assured irrigation facilities, watershed management, better extension and farming support